
In recent years, we have seen a rapid expansion of knowledge in the areas of neuroanaesthesia and neurointensive care. In the present book, the editors have successfully brought together essential elements of basic sciences and clinical practice of these two inter-related areas.

This, relatively small, yet comprehensive, textbook has 48 chapters and two appendices which are presented in eight different sections. The chapters have been contributed by internationally renowned authors, from a number of excellent centres in the UK, USA, and Canada. The editors have achieved a remarkable task of covering a full range of topics, and presenting them in a simple, systematic, logical, and easy-to-follow format. In particular, they have been extremely successful in maintaining consistency of style in all the chapters throughout the book.

Sections 1–3 cover the basic sciences; Sections 4 and 5 cover the areas of clinical practice as related to neuroanaesthesia and neurointensive care; and monitoring and miscellaneous topics are covered in Sections 6 and 7, respectively. All the chapters in these sections begin with a small table of contents, and end with summary and key points. They are brief, to-the-point, and didactic. I found that these chapters contained essential knowledge, presented in an easy-to-read format. As per the stated aims of the editors, I believe that residents and specialist trainees in anaesthesia and intensive care, who are undertaking a training module in neuroanaesthesia and neurointensive care, will find this format extremely useful. Given the brevity of the chapters, senior practitioners in the specialty may find this book to be a valuable starting point for a quick update. However, they will need other sources and texts for details on current scientific debates, controversies, and research updates in different subject areas.

I like the editor’s idea of incorporating appendices on clinical information resources and case scenarios. The appendix on clinical information resources, as related to neuroanaesthesia and neurointensive care, is very relevant when the majority of our ongoing learning material comes from electronic, web-based resources. Also, I believe that trainees will find going through the appendix on case scenarios extremely valuable; these scenarios are designed for trainees to consolidate their learning into dealing with day-to-day clinical problems.

In summary, I congratulate the editors for presenting this timely, valuable, and elegant resource for trainees in anaesthesia and intensive care. This, in my opinion, is an excellent textbook for those trainees in neuroanaesthesia and neurointensive care. I would also recommend it to practitioners in these areas who want a comprehensive text for a quick update.

R. P. Mahajan
Nottingham, UK
E-mail: ravi.mahajan@nottingham.ac.uk
doi:10.1093/bja/aep275


This is a single author book of just more than 100 pages in nine chapters which cover the subject of Anaesthesia for Day Surgery in a logical and practical way. It follows the patient’s journey from an overview of the subject through the practicalities of administration of anaesthesia to discharge home. The style of writing gives the reader good practical advice tempered with the evidence on all sides of the argument. Where the jury is still out, the author is unafraid to say so. Each chapter begins with a clear outline of the key points to be covered and lays out the individual subjects supported by good, relevant tables and boxes, which are referenced to key authors.

The book starts out exploring the sometimes confusing plethora of terms such as outpatient surgery, ambulatory surgery, day-case surgery, same day surgery, and office-based surgery and has an interesting section on the controversial subject of non-anaesthetist sedation. This is followed by a short chapter on equipment, monitoring, and facilities which opens with a poignant subsection entitled ‘Safety first’ which in many ways encapsulates the tone of this book very well.

Patient selection, assessment, and preparation are often the keys to successful management of day-case surgery and these are well outlined. The detail on functional assessment and the risks associated with co-morbidities and concomitant drug therapy are particularly informative. Analgesia and postoperative nausea and vomiting, while important in any area of anaesthetic practice, present specific problems in the arena of day surgery insofar as the ability to switch therapy later on may be limited and a failure in this area of management may lead to delayed discharge. The available options with supporting evidence are clearly presented. The conduct of anaesthesia including airway management and the application of regional
anaesthesia in the day-case setting are equally well covered. The author concludes with a chapter on the recovery process and discharge criteria using meaningful terminology such as ‘street fit’ and more scholarly measures such as Chung’s modified post-anaesthesia discharge scoring system. He also emphasizes the often overlooked need for follow-up to guide the practitioner’s future practice.

This small book works very well on a number of different levels. It is informative, regardless of experience, while whetting the appetite in areas which take your interest, pointing you in the right direction for more information. It is one to keep neatly tucked away on the machine for those awkward moments when the only sensible reply seems ‘because it works’.

I. R. Armstrong
Edinburgh, UK
E-mail: i.r.armstrong@btinternet.com

doi:10.1093/bja/aep276


This is a superb interactive DVD which provides an excellent background for the performance of ultrasound-guided blocks for anaesthesia and analgesia for operations on the lower limb. An international team of experts from countries including Canada, France, and the UK have contributed to the creation of the DVD.

The disc autostarts when inserted in the computer. The software needed to run the disc, DirectX9c, QuickTime 7.4, and the .net framework 1.1, are included in the package. The package is conveniently divided into four sections: principles and physics of ultrasound imaging; anatomy; the simulator; and a section on how to perform ultrasound-assisted peripheral nerve blocks.

The section on the principles and physics is well presented and contains 123 photo and text slides. It provides all the relevant and essential facts relating to the physics of ultrasound, the ultrasound machine, the ultrasound probe, imaging artifacts, scanning technique, and the needle visualization. The layout of the slides makes them easy to follow, and the relevant key clinical points are periodically reinforced with examples to provide an in-depth understanding of the subject from scratch.

The anatomy section is divided into two parts—the 3D anatomy and the cross-sectional anatomy. These cover the anatomy of the muscles, vessels, lumbar plexus, sacral plexus, bones, ligaments, tendons, and the articulations. It is possible to see the relationship of the nerve to the vessels, bones, and the nerves, using the simple show/hide button on the control panel. The 3D image can be rotated in any plane to simulate different patient positions. The cross-sectional anatomy section includes coloured diagrams at all levels from the L2 vertebra to the toes. This section greatly aids the interpretation of subsequent ultrasound images.

The simulation section covers femoral nerve, fascia iliaca, obturator nerve, saphenous nerve, sciatic nerve (transgluteal, subgluteal, popliteal, and lateral popliteal approaches), and the tibial nerve blocks. There is a user-friendly 11-slide tutorial which should be read before starting the simulations. The simulations are most impressive. The screen for the simulation of each block is divided into four parts: a main screen to perform the block, a secondary screen to see the response to nerve stimulation, an ultrasound screen to see real-time imaging when moving the probe, and the control panel to control the ultrasound and the needle position. The buttons on the control panel are easy to use and each simulation starts with identifying the landmark, followed by positioning of the ultrasound probe and manoeuvering of the needle to place it near the desired neural structure. The simulation experience is comparable with real life where the needle is controlled looking at the ultrasound screen with the fingers on the mouse controlling the position of the needle. At all times, the position of the needle can be seen relative to the muscle, bone, artery, or the nerve. There is a separate section on the lower limb blocks which provides a step-by-step audio-visual guide for each block.

The minimum system requirements to run the disc are Windows XP or Vista with 1 GB RAM and a good screen resolution (1024×768). This limits the disc usage on the currently available net books and entry level laptops. The other difficulty we faced was running the disc on hospital computers which restrict installation rights for the necessary software. This precluded the usage on any hospital computer, but it ran very smoothly on a Pentium mobile, 1 GB RAM laptop computer. The publishers have not commented upon its compatibility with Apple Mac operating systems, but we were unable to run the disc on an Apple Mac laptop.

On the whole, the DVD succeeds in its objective to provide a complete understanding of lower limb blocks to a beginner. In our opinion, this DVD should be available in every anaesthetic department. It will be especially useful for trainees with an interest in regional anaesthesia.

P. K. Gupta and P. M. Hopkins*
Leeds, UK
*E-mail: p.m.hopkins@leeds.ac.uk

doi:10.1093/bja/aep277